



0. 22 YEARS LATE - Story Preface
1. DEATH & DESTRUCTION IN MOJAVE
2. MISLEADING STATEMENTS
- 3. 22 YEARS LATE**
4. THE COMPRESSOR STATION
5. TONS OF CHROME 6
6. PG&E POISONS THE GROUNDWATER
7. DECEPTION REIGNS
8. SEVENTY-SEVEN PLAINTIFFS SUE
9. THE BATTLE
10. PG&E IS IN TROUBLE
11. TRIAL AND SETTLEMENT

Years after waste water from PG&E's compressor station at Hinkley, California began to contaminate the area's groundwater, the government ordered the installation of numerous wells to monitor the plume of contamination. The results showed levels of hexavalent chromium were present in the groundwater. This map depicts the plume and the location of monitoring wells (MW). Click on the image for a detailed view.

PG&E records revealed people at the company were concerned about chrome 6 contamination of Hinkley's groundwater "by at least the summer of 1965." (Plaintiffs' Trial Brief)

Investigating what PG&E officials knew about the contamination - and when they knew it - Fox TV (local channel 11) ran a series on May 23, 24 and 26, 1994. Here is part of the verbatim transcript contained in the court's file for the May 23rd report:

Fox Reporter: What did PG&E know and when did officials know it?

[PG&E Representative]: *It wasn't discovered until 1987 when, through a routine environmental survey, which we do on all our sites such as this, the Company discovered it.*

Fox Reporter: But this man, Victor Moore, worked at the Hinkley plant for more than 32 years and he says that a fellow worker found the contamination in 1965, across the street from the plant.

The Fox Reporter then relates additional investigation results:

Fox Reporter: We wanted to talk to Moore's co-worker but the man has died of cancer. However Fox News has obtained PG&E test data on that same well, and it seems to back up Moore's claim. It shows that in September, 1965, PG&E found levels up to 400 times the EPA's current safety standard, and answers from a top PG&E official under oath for the current lawsuit, bolster that 1965 discovery date.

Trying to understand this apparent inconsistency, the Fox Reporter pressed the issue:

Fox Reporter: We asked [the PG&E official] to explain that apparent 22-year contradiction. He says PG&E senior management wasn't told until 1987.

In other words, PG&E officials in Hinkley knew about the extraordinary levels of chrome 6 contamination, but senior management in San Francisco didn't?

The suggestion that senior management in San Francisco didn't know what was happening at Hinkley for 35 years is the biggest lie of all. (Plaintiffs' 6/6/94 Trial Brief)

Based on the evidence, high levels of chrome 6 contamination found in 1987 could not have been a surprise to the company, notwithstanding whether senior management knew. People and animals who lived in the area had been breathing, ingesting, and absorbing dangerous toxins into their bodies for decades.

Why did PG&E use so much chrome 6 at the Hinkley Compressor Station? And how did that chemical travel from plant facilities into the bodies of people who lived nearby?

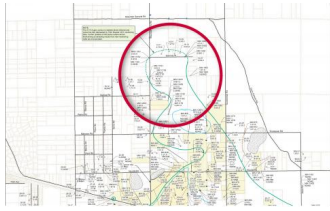
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/22-YEARS-LATE-Erin-Brockovich>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream



Monitoring Wells Near PG&E's Hinkley Compressor Station

Image online via the U.S. EPA (Environmental Protection Agency).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Monitoring-Wells-Near-PG-E-s-Hinkley-Compressor-Station0>